



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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Georgia's Pre-K Class Reductions Important Points to Remember

Introduction

- Georgia's Pre-K Program continues to grow. For the 2011-2012 school year, approximately 86,000 children will be served in every county across the state. Even with the current class reductions, the wait list will be substantially reduced. By the end of next school year, Bright from the Start (BFTS) projects that the waiting list will be reduced by 40 percent.
- With the recent reductions, Georgia's Pre-K remains focused on improving quality. In recent years, the program has implemented several new initiatives related to quality, and also raised standards for both lead and assistant teachers. These types of improvements will remain intact. Bright from the Start will continue to require four-year degrees for lead teachers, require a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential for assistant teachers. The agency will continue to monitor and provide professional development for early educators. In addition, offer inclusion classes will continue to be offered statewide.
- The process of determining programs for possible class reduction has not impacted the regional distribution of Pre-K classes across the state. The percentage of class reductions was proportional to the overall distribution of classes. For example, the percentage of reductions in the northwest region of the state is proportional to the number of existing Pre-K classes. The proportional distribution of Pre-K classes between Metro and Non-Metro Atlanta has not changed.
- Approximately 70% of the reductions have taken place in private child care centers. This has had minimal impact on the distribution of classes between Pre-K in private centers and local school systems.
- Bright from the Start is in the process of implementing the changes related to the budget cutbacks. Throughout the process, the agency has maintained its commitment to being transparent, equitable, open to new ideas, and child and family focused. The following highlights the process and details the initial impact of the class reductions.

General Process

- Even though the FY2012 budget allocates an additional 2,000 slots, adding two children per classroom necessitates closing approximately 300 Pre-K classrooms.
- In order to determine the specific programs for class reduction, BFTS used a variety of site-level and county-level data.

- First, BFTS surveyed all programs to see if they intended to request the same number of classes and then used site-specific data to identify classes that were not able to meet the terms of the grant. This step is referred to as “Tier One.”
- Second, BFTS used county level data to determine the specific number of class reductions per county. The agency used additional site level data to determine the programs that would be reduced. These two steps are referred to as “Tier Two.”
- Bright from the Start understands the impact that class reductions may have on individual programs. Whenever possible, BFTS reduced the number of classes in programs where there were previously multiple classrooms. Therefore, the overall impact on program closure will be reduced.
- Throughout the process, BFTS has sought and received feedback from many pertinent stakeholders, including private child care providers and school system administrators. Feedback took place in the form of focus groups, surveys and webinars. Before class reduction notification process began on April 20th, the agency conducted several webinars with its board, impacted legislators, the Governor’s office, and aforementioned stakeholders.

Initial Impact of Class Reduction: Pre-K Settings

- In order to ensure that parents have program choices that best meet their needs, Georgia’s Pre-K is housed in a variety of settings. More than 50% of Georgia’s Pre-K classrooms are housed in private child care centers. Since the majority of classrooms are housed in private child care centers, the majority of cuts also took place in these settings.
- Many rural counties only have a limited number of classrooms. To reduce these programs by even one classroom would significantly reduce the percentage of children in those counties who have the opportunity to attend Pre-K. In many of these counties, the local school system is the only Pre-K provider. Therefore, cuts to many school systems were minimal.
- Although the majority of class reductions occurred in private child care centers, the overall distribution of classes was not significantly impacted. In FY2011, the percentage of Pre-K classes located in a private child care centers was 55.82%; in 2012 that percentage will be 54.84%. Parent choice, a cornerstone of the program, remains intact.

Regional

- Georgia’s Pre-K is located in every county of the state. It is important that Georgia’s Pre-K be available in all regions of the state as well as both urban and rural areas.
- The following regional breakdown highlight the equitable regional impacts of the class reductions:
 - In 2011, the north region of the state housed approximately 22.06% of Pre-K classes. After the reductions, this region will house approximately 21.95% of Pre-K classes.
 - In 2011, the metro Atlanta counties of DeKalb and Fulton housed approximately 14.66% of Pre-K classes. After the reductions, this region will house approximately 14.98% of Pre-K classes.
 - In 2011, the central region of the state (encompassing Macon and counties south of Atlanta) housed approximately 14.54% of Pre-K classes. After the reductions, this region will house approximately 14.47% of Pre-K classes.
 - In 2011, the southwest region of the state housed 16.16% of Pre-K classes. After the reductions, this region will house approximately 16.14% of Pre-K classes.
 - In 2011, the southeast region of the state housed 15.9% of Pre-K classes. After the reductions, this region will house approximately 15.74% of Pre-K classes.
 - In 2011, the east region of the state (encompassing counties east and northeast of Atlanta) housed approximately 16.68% of Pre-K classes. After the reductions, this region will house approximately 16.73% of Pre-K classes.

- Comparing Metro to Non-Metro counties, similar proportional impacts can be discerned.
 - In 2011, 42.4% of Pre-K classes were located in Atlanta metro area counties (as measured by the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta 13-county service region) while 57.6% of Pre-K classes were located in the non metro counties.
 - In 2012, 42.8% of Pre-K classes will be located in Atlanta metro area counties while 57.2% of Pre-K classes will be located in the non metro counties.

Conclusion

- The process for determining class reductions ensured that no one area of the state was impacted more than other areas. Parent choice was preserved as Bright from the Start kept options for families in choosing a Pre-K program.
- Bright from the Start remains committed to meeting the needs of Georgia's four year olds and their families. The process of determining programs for class reductions was undertaken with our main concern always being centered on minimizing the impact to children and their families.